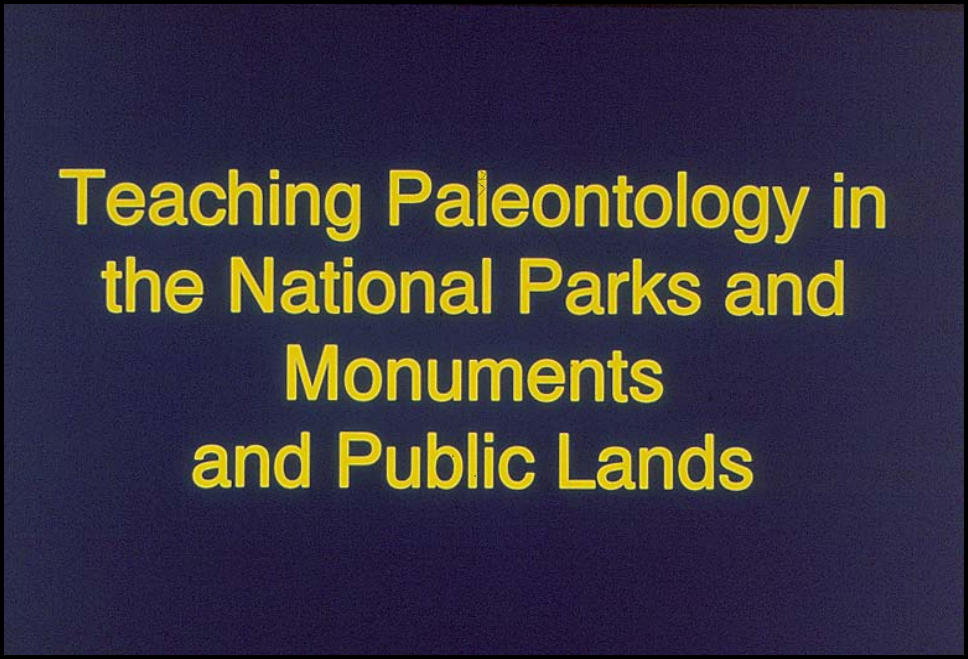


The environment is the world we live in. An environment has two parts. The first part is the physical part: air, water, soil, and climate. The second part includes all the plants and animals.

There are many different kinds of environments on Earth and different kinds of living things are at home in each one. Let's look at a few different environments and some of the animals and plants that live in them.

The prairie,

the ocean,

the mountains,

the desert,

a lake.

All are environments. And each is a place where different plants and animals live.

Some environments are rugged.

Wyoming Plain

Others are flat.

Some are cold.

Others are warm.

They may be dry.

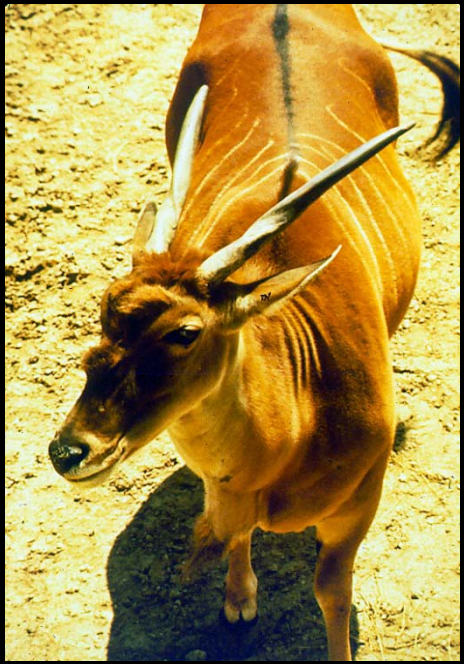
Or wet.

Animals and plants have special ways to survive in their environments. These are called adaptations.

The wooly coat of the bison is an adaptation that allows it to survive harsh winters and summer heat.

Prairie dogs spend the winter underground in hibernation. They are especially adapted because they can burrow and dig themselves a home.

What special adaptation do birds have? That's right, they can fly! And so, most birds are at home in the air. Environments are animals' homes. But other living things are also a part of their environments.



Some plants and animals are adapted to compete with the other living things in their environments. Some have horns or antlers for competing with other members of their own species for territory or mates.

Others are fast runners.

Kangaroo

Porcupine

Some animals…

and plants have spines for protection.

Some have poison, like the rattlesnake...

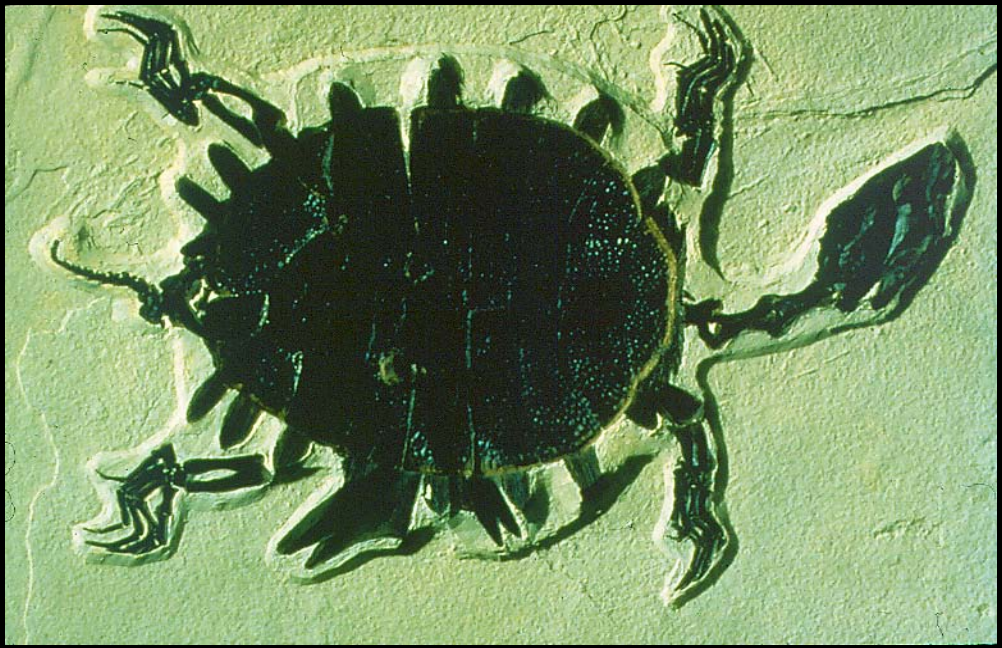
and the scorpion.

It is also very important for animals and plants to be able to get enough food to live. That's why many living things have very special adaptations for gathering food. The giraffe has a long neck so it can eat leaves from tall trees.

The anteater has a very long tongue to collect ants from inside their nests.

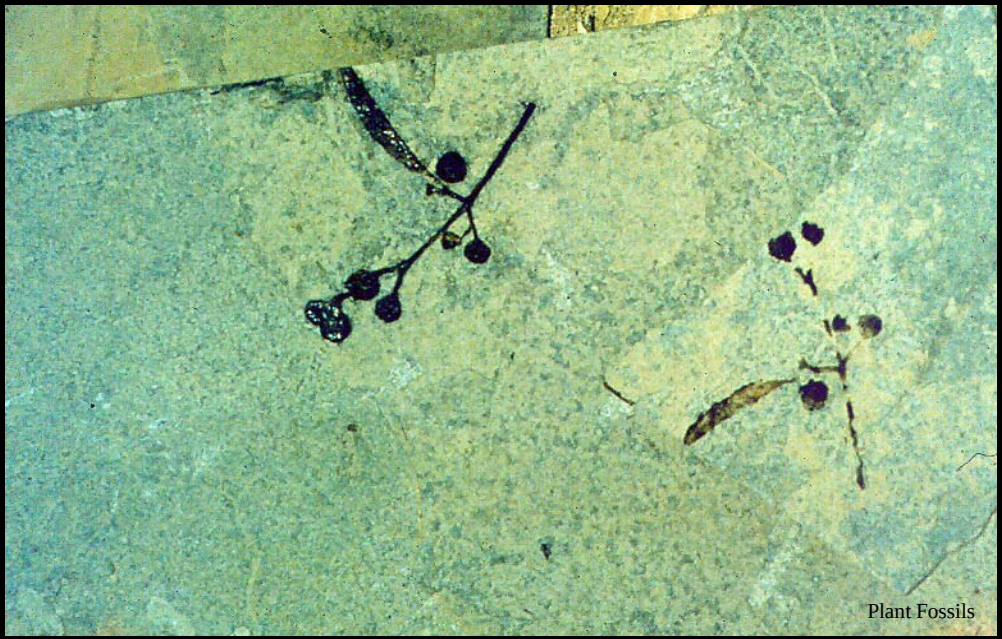
Chipmunks collect food in pouches in their cheeks. There are many other ways living things are adapted to the world they live in. Can you think of some?

Animals and plants that lived many years ago were adapted to their worlds just as plants and animals are today. We know about plants and animals of the past because of fossils.



A fossil is some evidence of a plant or animal that has been preserved for many thousands or millions of years.

A person who studies fossils is called a paleontologist. Paleontologists learn about ancient animals by looking at shells, bones, and teeth of fossil animals,



and at stems, roots, and leaves of fossil plants.

They also learn about what the environment was like by studying the rocks that fossils are found in. A paleontologist uses all information possible to learn about ancient worlds.

You can learn about fossils and ancient environments by visiting a national park or museum. You can ask the people who studied the fossils and rocks of the area to explain about what kinds of animals and plants used to live there, and what the environment was like.

Environments and Adaptations

Studying fossils might make you think how your own environment is like the ancient one. You might also find out that the environment has changed a lot.

Fossils are interesting because they tell us about our world long ago.
What can you learn from fossils?